(d) if so, the steps taken in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT (SHRIMATI D. PURANDESWARI): (a) to (d) The objective of the Scheme for Providing Quality Education in Madarsas (SPQEM) is to provide financial assistance and encourage traditional institutions like Madarsas and Maktabs to introduce Science, Mathematics, Social Studies, Hindi and English in their curriculum so that children studying in these institutions gain academic proficiency. SPQEM provides for appointment of teachers, strengthening of libraries/book banks, purchase of Science Kits, Math Kits and other essential pedagogical equipment, establishment of Science/Computer Labs in Madarsa, conducting in-service teacher training, meeting cost of registration fees/examination fees and cost of study material by NIOS. It also provides for strengthening State Madarsa Boards to enable them to monitor progress in the Madarsa modernisation programme.

Madarsas which have been in existence for three years and registered under Central or State Government Acts or Madarsa Board or with Wakf Boards or NIOS are eligible to apply for assistance under this programme. The Scheme has been circulated to the State Governments in October, 2008. No instance of conversion of private schools into Madarsas in Uttar Pradesh has come to the notice of Government.

Regulatory authority for higher education

1141. DR. RAM PRAKASH: Will the Minister of HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT be pleased to state:

(a) whether there is any proposal under consideration to establish an independent Regulatory Authority for Higher Education;

(b) if so, the functions and scope of the said Authority; and

(c) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT (SHRIMATI D. PURANDESWARI): (a) to (c) National Knowledge Commission has recommended the establishment of an Independent Regulatory Authority for Higher Education (IRAHE) which would be responsible for setting criteria, deciding entry, according degree-granting powers to higher education institutions and for licensing accreditation agencies. The "Committee to Advise on Renovation and Rejuvenation of Higher Education", constituted by the Government under Prof. Yash Pal has recommended the creation of an all-encompassing National Commission for Higher Education and Research (NCHER), with Constitutional status to replace the existing regulatory bodies including the University Grants Commission (UGC), All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE), National Council for Teacher Education (NCTE) and Distance Education Council (DEC). It has also been recommended that the regulatory bodies in professional education such as the Medical Council of India (MCI), Dental Council of India (DCI), Bar Council of India (BCI) etc. should be divested of their academic functions and the

universities should be made responsible for academic content of all courses and programmes of study including professional courses. The need for an overarching independent body for overseeing the entire spectrum of higher education has been accepted by Government as one of its priorities.

Employment of expatriate teachers

1142. SHRI A. ELAVARASAN: Will the Minister of HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government has set norms to set up International Schools and a strict policy framework for their functioning in our country;

(b) whether it is a fact that there is growing demand for Indian Employment visas for teachers from western countries to be recruited by the so called International schools in India at expatriate salaries and perks for teaching routine subjects like maths, physics etc.; and

(c) if so, the details thereof and the steps taken by Government to prevent foreigners to come to India and occupy such posts, which do not call for any special skills not obtainable in India?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT (SHRIMATI D. PURANDESWARI): (a) Currently, there are no specific norms to set up international schools in the country. Such schools are generally affiliated to foreign boards and are set up with requisite approvals.

(b) and (c) Such statistics is not centrally maintained in this Ministry. At present, Indian Missions have been empowered to grant employment visas to foreigners, including foreign teachers coming to India for employment, in conformity with the provisions laid down in the visa manual, and in case of teachers, subject to ceiling prescribed for the relevant schools.

Misuse of SSA funds

†1143. SHRI RAJEEV CHANDRASEKHAR: Will the Minister of HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT be pleased to state:

(a) whether cases have come to Government's notice of misuse and diversion of funds sanctioned to the States under Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA);

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) the steps proposed to be taken to retrieve the diverted or misused funds to be used for the purpose for which they have been sanctioned?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT (SHRIMATI D. PURANDESWARI): (a) to (c) The Performance Audit report on Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) for the period 2001-02 to 2004-05, submitted by the Comptroller and Auditor General of India in August 2006, indicates that an amount of Rs. 53 crores can be classified as

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.